

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NATO 02924

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, NATO, DPC

SUBJECT: UK REACTION TO US DEFENSE INITIATIVES

1. DURING A DISCUSSION WITH DEFAD ON 9 MAY, UK DEFAD (PETERS) DESCRIBED THE TALKING POINTS BEING PREPARED FOR MOD MULLEY'S INTERVENTION AT THE DPC MINISTERS' MEETING ON THE US SHORT- AND LONG-TERM DEFENSE INITIATIVES ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

-- GENERAL ENDORSEMENT OF THE US PROPOSALS, AGREEING THAT "NATO'S COLLECTIVE FORCE POSTURE" NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED. NATO'S CURRENT PLANNING APPROACH IS AN "INCOMPLETE PROCESS," WHICH NEEDS TO LOOK MORE "IMAGINATIVELY AT REQUIREMENTS" AND NEEDS TO BE "PROJECTED FURTHER OUT IN TIME."

-- LONG-TERM DEFENSE REVIEW. "HAPPY TO AGREE," AND REVIEW SHOULD SERVE "TO STIMULATE AND FOCUS NATO ATTENTION"

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TION" TO ITS PRIORITY NEEDS OVER THE LONG TERM.

- (I) ENDORSES THE IDEA OF LIMITING THE EXERCISE TO A SPECIFIC NUMBER OF KEY AREAS BUT "NINE MAY BE TOO MANY TO DEVELOP FULLY BY NEXT SPRING." MIGHT BE USEFUL TO GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO "EXAMINING THE MOST URGENT FIRST." WILL LEAVE MECHANICS TO OTHERS TO DECIDE BUT MIGHT WANT

TO CONSIDER SETTING UP A "STEERING GROUP" UNDER THE PERMREPS.

- (II) APPLAUDS NOTION OF BUILDING ON EXISTING MACHINERY AND PROJECTED PROGRAMS. CARE MUST BE GIVEN TO GETTING THE "DESIGN AND STRUCTURE" OF THE COLLECTIVE PROGRAMS RIGHT. MIGHT NECESSITATE FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO ALLOW FRENCH TO JOIN IN IF THEY SO DESIRE.
- (III) LESSONS LEARNED IN THE NPG NEW TECHNOLOGY STUDY MIGHT BE USEFULLY APPLIED TO CONVENTIONAL PROGRAMS. WE NEED TO DEVELOP "ANALYTICAL COMPARISONS OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES BETWEEN THE WARSAW PACT AND NATO." WE WILL ALSO NEED SUCH COMPARISONS FOR "ALL NINE OF THE AREAS" THE US HAS PROPOSED. THIS MIGHT TAKE ADDITIONAL TIME BUT WOULD BE WORTH THE DELAY IN PROVIDING A BETTER END PRODUCT.

- (IV) THOUGH AGREEING IN PRINCIPLE WITH THE THRUST OF THE LONG-TERM REVIEW, AT THE SAME TIME IT MUST BE RECOGNIZED THAT "RESOURCES ARE FINITE." CONSEQUENTLY WE NEED A "REALISTIC AND FLEXIBLE APPROACH" TO LONG-TERM REQUIREMENTS IN WHICH LOWER PRIORITIES MIGHT HAVE TO BE DEFERRED. MOST IMPORTANTLY, "TRADE-OFFS WOULD HAVE TO BE FOUND IN FUTURE DEFENSE PROGRAMS."

-- SHORT-TERM MEASURES. THE THREE AREAS PROPOSED BY THE US LOOK ABOUT RIGHT AND UK WILLING TO EXAMINE THE NMA'S RECOMMENDATIONS. THERE ARE, OF COURSE, "PHYSICAL LIMITS" ON PRODUCTION TIME, AS WELL AS "FUNDING CONFIDENTIAL

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STRAINTS."

2. PETERS SAID THAT THOUGH THE TALKING POINTS HAD NOT YET BEEN APPROVED BY MULLEY, THERE SEEMED TO BE GENERAL SUPPORT FOR THE US PROPOSALS IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE.

3. DEFAD EXPRESSED SUBSTANTIAL RESERVATIONS ABOUT IDEA OF EXTENSIVE ANALYTICAL COMPARISONS, NOTING THAT SPRING 1978 DEADLINE WOULD HARDLY PERMIT THEM AND SUGGESTING THAT SUCH ANALYSES MIGHT PROVE SUPPORTIVE AS APPROVED LONG-TERM PROGRAMS MOVED AHEAD THEREAFTER. PETERS APPEARED TO AGREE, AND WE BELIEVE HE MAY RECOMMEND TO LONDON THAT THE NOTION BE DROPPED FROM MULLEY'S TEXT. STREATOR

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